GOLD HILL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 26 GOLD HILL, OR. 97525 Phone 855-9351 OCTOBER 1990

For years prior to the arrival of representatives of the Portland Cement Company, it had been known that the limestone deposits in the Gold Hill area were of high quality.

Representatives from the Portland Company arrived in February of 1911. They brought their diamond drill, and began prospecting on the ledge owned by the Gold Ray Company. This ledge was across the Rogue River on the mountain just south of Gold Hill.

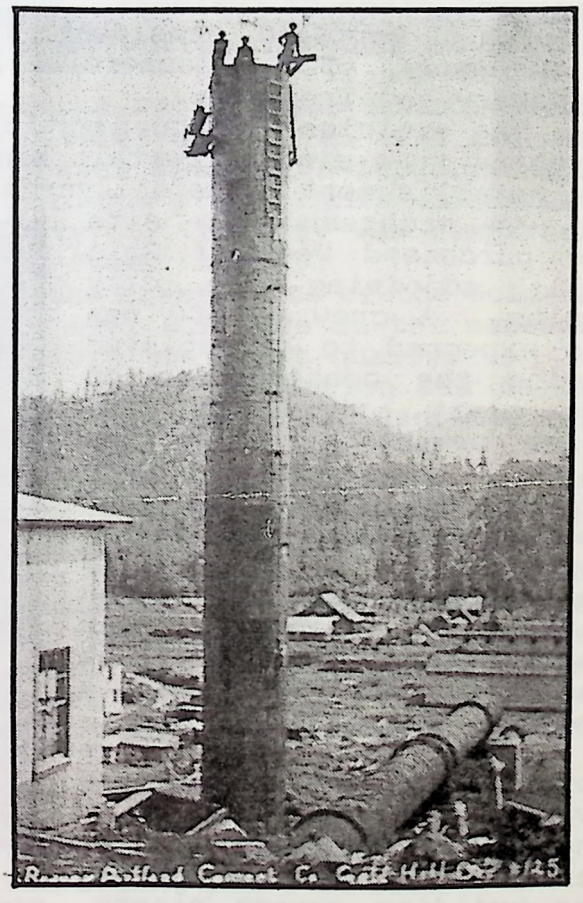
If the probe showed that the limestone went to a reasonable depth, it could mean the development of a huge cement manufacturing plant near the city.

The Portland Cement Company was composed of a number of capitalists from Portland. Many of the local people thought that they had an "inside tip" that Hill's Oregon Trunk railroad would pass through Gold Hill. This line was to be built from Central Oregon to Crescent City. If in fact it did pass through the city, it would mean an easier and cheaper way for the cement company to get their product to Central Oregon. Much of the cement, of course, would be used to build up the inland empire, which had yet to be developed.

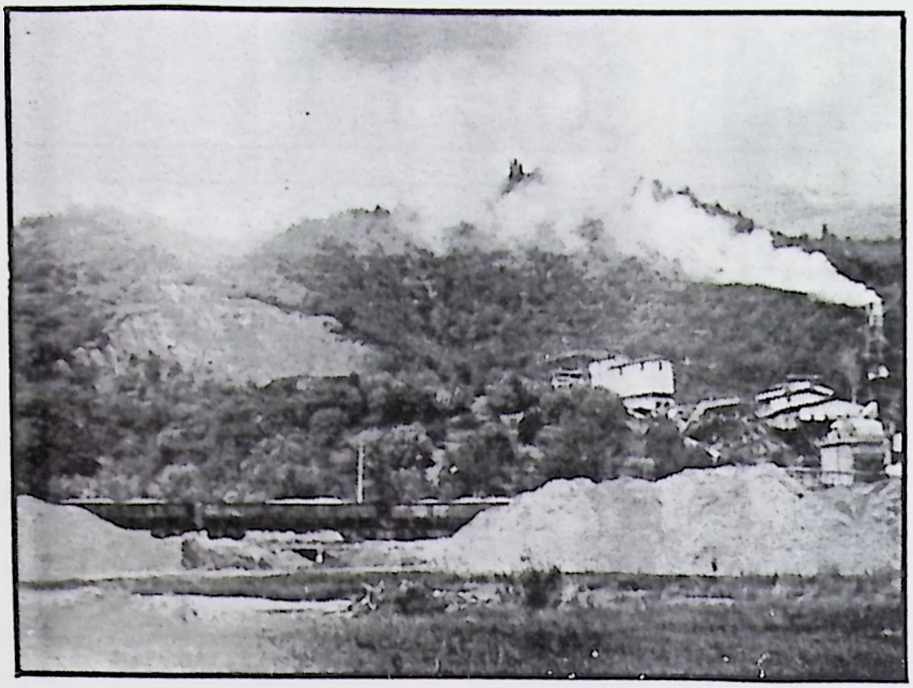
Location of a cement plant at Gold Hill depended on building Hill's Oregon Trunk through the city. It would be necessary to develop a market beyond that supported by towns along the main line of the Southern Pacific between Portland and San Francisco. Otherwise, cement manufactured in Gold Hill could be sold in only a very limited territory. This small market would not warrant building a plant of the size, that might be expected from a concern of the character and financial standing of the Portland Cement Company.

Gold Hill would have a very small marketing area, because California had cement plants near the Pacific Ocean, and it was cheaper to use a boat and ship the cement to Portland for distribution than to ship it from Gold Hill.

There were several factors to be considered before building a plant at Gold Hill. One of the main ones would be raising the capital to finance such a project. J. C. Burch of Portland spent several months in the Rogue Valley during the summer of 1912 trying to secure sufficient stock in the cement plant. He was met with frustration, and the Southern Oregon project was given up for a location in Washington. Mr. Burch left for his home in Portland that fall. The people of the Rogue Valley did not give up, however in constant touch with him. Burch was finally convinced to reconsider their



This photograph was taken during construction of the Beaver Portland Cement Plant ca. 1915
Photo Courtesy of Ted Wharton



The Beaver Cement Plant in full operation, taken from Highway 99 about 1944. Photograph donated by Ray Ritter 1987

offer, and the attention of the Portland financiers was directed to the benefits of the Gold Hill location. Medford bankers secured $35,000 of the lacking quarter of a million dollars that Oregon lacked to finance the plant.

Many months were spent negotiating with the railroad to secure a sliding scale that would enable the plant at Gold Hill to compete with the Portland market. After many setbacks, the plant in Gold Hill was to be constructed.

April 16, 1913 in Salem Oregon, the Beaver Portland Cement Company filed articles of incorporation with the Secretary of State. With a capital stock of $600,000, eastern investors put up $300,000 and capitalists from Portland invested $200,000, and another $50,000 was raised locally. Portland was to be the principal place of business. Officers of the newly formed company were; J. C. Burch of Portland, President; William Schrump, of Medford, Vice President; C. S. Woody, of the Commercial Banking & Trust Company, of Kansas City, Secretary and Treasurer.[2]

The articles of incorporation stated that the company would "engage in anything from digging certain kinds of clay to operating logging roads and the establishment of retail yards."[3]

An eighteen acre site was purchased west of Gold Hill, adjoining the city limits. A crew of 500 men was expected to be employed during the construction of the plant, which was the first cement plant in the state. The completion date of January 1, 1914 was set. Upon completion, the plant would employ a crew of 70 men, and produce 1,000 barrels of cement dust per day. At that time this plant was to be the largest single industry in Southern Oregon.

This 1953 aerial photograph will give the viewer an idea of the enormous size of the plant. Photograph donated by Ray Ritter 1987

The contract for construction of the plant was awarded to the Leigh Hunt Engineering Company, of Kansas City, whose specialty was building cement plants. At the time the Hunt company was awarded the contract, they were busy building a $1,500,000.00 plant in Medicine Hat, Canada, which caused a slight delay in the construction of the Gold Hill plant.

Engineer Dan Servie who represented the Leigh Hunt Engineering Company was first to arrive in Gold Hill in May of 1913. He started the preliminary work of laying out the sites where the plant would be constructed.

This is the type of sack that was used to package the cement. Donated by Francis Brown 1988

The next step was Southern Pacific petitioning the Railroad Commission to put into effect a low rate for hauling cement from Gold Hill to Portland. Special rates were granted to Southern Pacific Railroad Company at $2.00 per ton by the State Railroad Commission on June 17, 1913.[4] Two years earlier an act had been enacted by the Legislature that granted the Railroad Commission the power to authorize lower rates when it was evident that it would facilitate building up of the state.[5] The rate of $2 a ton was equivalent to 40 cents a barrel. Shipment from San Francisco to Portland by water cost $3 a ton or 60 cents a barrel. The lowered rate made the new Oregon cement market very competitive.

The first contract secured by the Beaver Portland Cement Company was with Jackson County. The plant was to supply the county with 50,000 barrels of cement for use in the county highway by June 1, 1914. The cement plant went on to supply material for many more construction projects in Southern Oregon.

Power for the plant was supplied from the Rogue River Public Service corporation's power plant just east of the city of Gold Hill. The old canal had to be cleaned out and deepened, the tail race widened, a larger concrete head gate installed, and lines had to be run to the plant. This necessitated shutting down of the power plant. Electricity for the city was temporarily taken from the line of the California-Oregon Power Company.

Nearly a ton of powder was used opening the quarry site of the Gold Hill cement plant. Many onlookers watched from a safe distance as the manzanita and chaparral covered hillside opened up to form the great quarry.

The company faced many setbacks before actual production was to take place. Not only did financial troubles plague construction, but the kiln, which was the third largest in the world, was lost in transit.

After months of paper work the kiln was finally located at Yuma, Arizona. Three sections, (two 70-feet, and one 50-foot section) were shipped from the foundry at Iola, Kansas in the spring of 1914 at the cost of $15,000. Midway to their destination via the southern route the cars that carried them disappeared. Twice during shipment the cars that the sections rested on were condemned and it was necessary to load them onto other cars. The kiln weighed 1,200,000 pounds and was nearly 200 feet long, and 10 feet in diameter. It was "roomy enough for a dinner party, or the tango."[6]

A letter to the Gold Hill News dated Portland, Oregon, July 29, 1915 stated the following:

> "Dear Sir:
>
> You are at liberty, if you care to do so, to state upon my authority that work upon the cement plant at Gold Hill will be resumed at once and the plant completed as soon as machinery can be delivered and installed.
>
> I have just returned from a conference with the eastern stockholders and we have decided to put in the

necessary money and complete the plant, having full faith that Oregon will return in a business way to normal condition gradually but surely. Some of the necessary machinery is now in the way and we will be prepared to manufacture and ship agricultural lime by the 1st of September and Portland Cement a month or two later.

This will doubtless be good news to many of the people of Gold Hill, while it may be a disappointment to some of the chronic knockers.

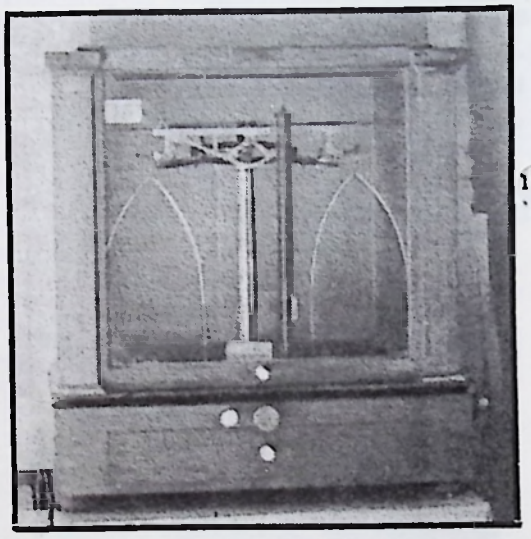
Yours very truly,
J. C. Burch"

The Beaver Portland (the process for making cement, not the Oregon city) Cement Company changed hands through the years. It was first known as Beaver Portland Cement Company, then Pacific Portland Company, Ideal Cement Company, Ideal Basic Industries and Holnan Corporation.

When the plant first started, the men filled the burlap bags with scoop shovels. Beaver Cement came in cotton sacks and later in paper sacks, and in later years it was shipped in bulk. The cement plant employed between 100 and 150 men.,

When the government sampled cement products from all over the United States, Gold Hill's product was found superior. The cement manufactured at the Gold Hill location was chosen to supply the cement for the United States Naval Base on the Aleutian Islands.,

In 1944 the cement plant started construction on the power plant (now famous for Gold Hill's bat guano) that is now abandoned near the Gold Rogue Sports Park. The power plant remained in operation until 1973.



This analytical balance from the Beaver Cement plant is so precise that it can weigh the mass of a period mark made by an ordinary lead pencil.
Donated by Jack Parker 1990

The Gold Hill plant served the community for nearly 60 years. Although the plant shut down in 1967, the terminal remained open and the bulk product continued to be shipped. The Gold Hill plant was the biggest plant in Oregon. The company supplied the West Coast from Eugene to Montague and east to Klamath Falls.,

Making cement is an interesting and dirty job. Some of the lime rock that was required for the plant was quarried at Zacher Crossing, which was where the Bristol Silica Plant is now located. There was a crusher at Zacher Crossing that crushed the rock. It was then loaded into Southern Pacific cars and shipped a mile east to the cement plant. When the rock arrived at the plant it went up an inclined tram and was dumped into another crusher. From this crusher is was taken by an iron bucket elevator and put into one of three bins in a building. From here the rock was trammed to another building where the shale, or decomposed rock was mixed with lime rock. The two were then ground and mixed with water. The product from this process was known as slurry. Slurry tanks were provided to store this mixture. The mixture was then put through a tube into the kiln, where it was fired for a certain length of time. The kiln was about 150 feet long with a smoke stack that stood 100 feet high.

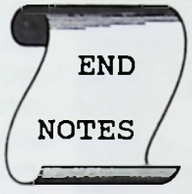
When it came out of the kiln it was in a stage known as clinkers. The clinkers were forced through a tube called the cooler. This is where gypsum was mixed with the clinkers, and each substance added gave the mixture a new property.

Another elevator was used to convey this product to the cooler bins. It was kept there until it could be run through a mill that ground the

clinkers to a fine power. It was then put through two more mills and ground and reground before being conveyed upstairs in this building and dumped into a set of conveyors. From there a wide belt carried what was now cement to the storage bins. From the bins it was then sent to the sacking department to be sacked and shipped. From the sacking department, it was loaded on trucks and taken to the Southern Pacific cars where it was loaded for shipment.[10]

The Beaver Portland Cement Plant will be featured on the cover of our calendar this year. It is important to remember that gold dust was not the only dust to make our town famous.

(C) Sept. 1990 Linda Morehouse Genaw



1 Gold Hill News February 18, 1911
2 Gold Hill News April 19, 1913
3 Ibid April 19, 1913
4 Gold Hill News June 21, 1913
5 Gold Hill News June 7, 1913
6 Gold Hill News July 4, 1914
7 Interview with Ray Ritter 9/21/90
8 Ibid 9/21/90
9 Ibid 9/21/90
10 Gold Hill Annual 1922

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

To our members,

Things have been going very well for our society this year. I believe it's because we have a dedicated group of volunteers who are always willing to help, no matter what the project may be.

Without this essential core of tireless workers there probably wouldn't be a place of our own to meet. There would also be a great deal less preserved in the way of oral histories, artifacts and photographs. Not to mention the time spent cataloguing donated items and transcribing oral histories. The hours spent at meetings, work parties, greeting inquisitive visitors and gathering information. All the efforts to restore or copy items so fragile that one is afraid to even touch them.

But if everyone was too afraid to touch or hesitant to ask vital questions the history books would most certainly be smaller.

I applaud all of you for sharing your love of history with others and for caring enough to complete tasks that at times can seem to be of an insurmountable magnitude. Thank you for being there when you were needed most!

Cindy Faubion, President

MANY THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING

Clare Moore for the years she volunteered her time and energy as secretary and treasurer.

Winona Nichols for volunteering to take over the crucial duties of society treasurer.

LaRue & Earl Morris for giving Southern Oregon another summer to enjoy their fascinating Gold Gulch town.

The members who attended the Gold Hill Historical Society's annual picnic and brought so much delicious food and delightful entertainment for all.

Gene, Winona, Mary and others who regularly volunteer time at our building so it can be open to the public three times a week.

Mable Van Horn for giving the society a copy of her interesting book about Central Point.

Janet and Jerry Sessions, Crayetta Armstrong, Mary Bradish, Alyce Bottleson, Tom Cushman, Winona and Ken Nichols, Clare Moore, Ida and Randy Tilley, Gene Heil, Dixie Wormington and Linda Genaw who donated items, baked cookies, and worked on a Saturday to make our rummage/bake sale a great success. We earned nearly $400.00 from the sale.

We also received a membership the day of the sale. Gold Hill's Police Chief and her husband! Welcome aboard Katie and Chuck.

MEMBER PROFILE

Genevieve Heil

GENEVIEVE MARY SANDERS, a "typical war baby"' was born on August 14, 1918, in her grandparent's Summerville, Oregon home. The new parents and their baby were soon back in Palmer Junction at the logging camp where the ex-soldier was returning to his former occupation as aN engineer. Destined to be the eldest of 16 children, Gen grew up learning to do about anything that needed to be done. This led to an interesting life which she is adept at relating with endless entertaining anecdotes.

Her first school was located in Summerville where she was "drafted" into the first grade at the tender age of five because of the schoolteacher's desire to give the only other girl in school a peer. The entire remainder of the student body consisted of 16 boys. Gen's uncle had already helped her learn how to read so she was more than up to the task of book learning.

By the time she was ten years old her father had his own filling station. As the only mechanic in the area, he had more work than he could handle alone so Gen was introduced to electrical work and spent many non-school hours toiling beside him.

She was a young sixth grader when her sickly mother passed away. Until her father remarried the following year, Gen capably helped her dad keep things going for her younger brothers and sister by washing clothes in a big copper boiler, sewing on the old Singer machine and cooking. These tasks had gradually been taught to the eldest child through necessity as her mother grew weaker.

Earning her high school diploma, while helping with the home and numerous younger siblings, Gen's deepest desire was to go into nursing but she could not afford it. She did housework until she met and married handsome Rudy Heil in 1938. The marriage was to last 46 years.

When Rudy became bedridden with a collapsed lung Gen went to work for the WPA to help keep the family going. After he had healed sufficiently, Rudy attended barber college and eventually became renowned as an exceptionally talented stylist, with his own shop.

The Heils both worked in the shipyards during the war. Due to her father's early tutelage, Gen was a journeyman electrician after only four months and was an instructor after six months.

Gene Heil entertained us at the annual picnic by doing the "can can" on TV tray

The couple's first son died at age two of a staph infection. After several miscarriages, Gen gave birth to two more sons, Neil and Herbert. At age six Neil lost most of his hearing due to polio yet both boys went on to graduate from college. Neil is now in electronics and Herbert is a probation officer.

Aside from mothering her own sons and 26 other children who needed temporary shelter, Gen has cooked in a logging camp, worked as a telephone operator, and finally came back to her first love, nursing. At age 54 she received her LVN degree, proud to have been on the president's list all through college.

Gen was forced to quit her hospital work after a total hip replacement. After nursing Rudy until his passing from emphysema, she decided to move to Gold Hill, "knowing it was a nice place". With a multitude of kinfolk in this area, she doesn't have time to get lonely here. And large family reunions are held yearly, with the first of the 16 original Sanders' siblings passing away just a few months ago. Gen's own two sons have given her three granddaughters and, now, there are even four great-grandsons.

Though recently in ill health, Genevieve still staffs the Gold Hill Historical Society's office each Tuesday afternoon, enjoying the chance to share her enthusiasm for our local history. Being a founding member of this Society is "one of the most important things" she has done. (We'll all agree with that Gen!) J.S.

The board of the Hearing Aid Open would like to thank all of our members who so graciously gave money for a Sponsor Tee for the golf tournament this year. The money earned from the tournament is used by the Jackson Education Service District to help hearing impaired children. This year a television, closed caption decoder, a VCR, a cart to hold everything and a series of American Sign Language Tapes were purchased for Scenic Junior High School with the $2500.00 raised.

Thank You All
Jono Nutter
Tinker Nutter
Reg Genaw
Pete Zukas

Ted Wharton, who is in charge of logos for our society, is accepting ideas. Please bring your logo design to our October 16th meeting for consideration. Three logos have been submitted so far. Come to the meeting and show off your talent!

ATTENTION

The Medford Meier & Frank store is giving non-profit organizations an opportunity to sell their fund-raising cook books November 9th 10th & 11th. Art Campbell suggested that we have one of the dishes from the cook book on hand for people to sample. If you would like to sign up to man our table or prepare one of the recipes from the cook book please contact President Cindy Faubion.

Winona Nichols volunteered to act as Treasurer at our August meeting. She was unanimously voted in by our members at the September meeting. She will be filling the position vacated by Clare Moore.

MEMBER HAPPENINGS:

The Starns family held its reunion in August. It was attended by over 100 family members. Cindy reported that she is making strides toward charting the family history back to the 1700's.

Alyce Bottleson's daughter Rene' was married at the Gold Hill beach September 15th. This sounded like a very eventful wedding, as Rene' was driven around Gold Hill on the back of the Fire Truck as well as a motorcycle in her wedding dress. Rene' is the bride of Fireman Jim Webb. Congratulations Rene' and Jim!

Charles B. "Chuck" Wharton, Professor of Electrical Engineering, had the honor of representing Cornell University during a three week conference in the U.S.S.R..

The Laboratory Tours and Beams 90' conference lasted from June 24-July 12, 1990. It was attended by 27 Scientists from around the world. The conference was sponsored at the expense of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences.

In addition to the all of the technical data gathered by Mr. Wharton, he came home enlightened by the cultural differences of our two countries.

A standard breakfast there consisted of cold cuts, cheese, dark bread, kefir, sweet rolls and coffee. Wharton seemed amazed at the amount of veal eaten by the Russian people. The 2:00 pm dinner consisted of the same cold cuts as for breakfast, plus caviar, sardines on buttered bread followed by veal cutlets, vegetables, tea and cookies. Supper was served from 10:00 pm until midnight. There were usually numerous Vodka toasts.

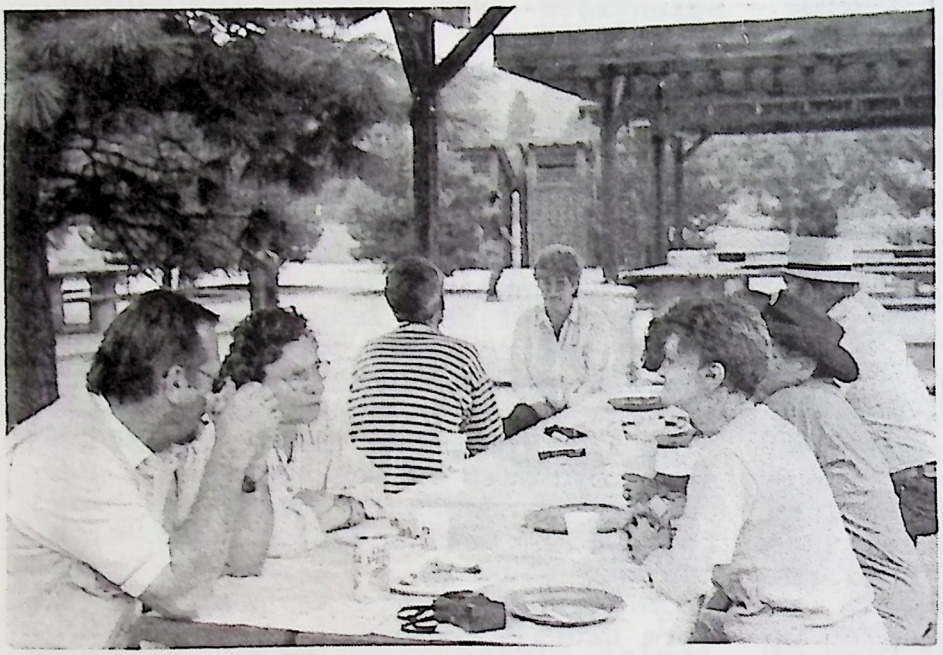
Water was difficult to obtain so dehydration was a problem. Tap water was considered unsafe to drink, and a salty mineral water was substituted.

Wharton was scheduled to give a 90 minute talk July 10th at Novosibirsk on high power microwaves. He was so well received that his talk lasted two hours.

Wharton attended a private dinner party at the home of the director of the Institute of Nuclear Physics after his talk. This was enjoyed very much by Wharton, because he was served excellent food and no veal cutlets!

President Cindy Faubion has been selected as a member for the Grants-In-Aid committee with the Southern Oregon Historical Society.

Top photographs (left, 1 to r) Alice Taylor, Alyce Bottleson and Crayetta Armstrong entertained us with a skit at our annual picnic August 26. Center photo; Don Moore and Clare Moore, Clare told us about the bead work she is learning to do. Right photo; Don Moore gave us a demonstration using his Kentucky long rifle. He also brought a Hawkins 50 caliber cap lock, a trade rifle, a German drilling double barrel shot gun with a rifle barrel underneath and cap lock revolver.



Photograph left, Richard Faltersack, Gene Heil, Tom Cushman, Shirley Faltersack, Crayetta Armstrong, Clare Moore and Don Moore enjoy an after dinner conversation.

If you, or a friend would like to help us preserve the rich history of Gold Hill and the surrounding area, receive the historical society newsletter, and other fun stuff, complete the form below and return it with your $5.00 check or money order for a Family Membership to:

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165 4th St.
Gold Hill, Oregon 97525

Name_____

Address_____

City_____State_____Zip_____

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